

IN THE CLAIMS:

Please cancel claims 16, 19, 21 and 37-39 without prejudice, and amend claims 1, 3, 4-8, 10, 11, 20, 32, 34, 49 and 55-60 so that the claims read as follows:

1. (Currently Amended) An absorbent garment comprising:

a chassis comprising front and back panels each having a terminal crotch edge and a terminal waist edge, said front and back panels each having a body side surface and a garment side surface, said terminal crotch edges of said front and back panels spaced apart in a longitudinal direction so as to form a gap between said terminal crotch edges; and

an absorbent element bridging said gap and directly connected to said garment side surface of said chassis front and back panels at respective a first location locations and comprising a cover sheet having a first portion directly detachably connected to ~~at least one of~~ a second portion of said cover sheet ~~and said garment side surface of said chassis~~ at a second location, wherein said first and second portions of said cover sheet are each formed on a first surface of said cover sheet, said absorbent element comprising an absorbent material expandable from at least a first condition to a second condition, said absorbent material disposed adjacent a second surface of said cover sheet opposite said first surface, wherein said first portion of said cover sheet detaches from said ~~at least one of said second portion of said cover sheet and said garment side surface of said chassis~~ at at least a portion of said second location when said absorbent material expands to said second condition.

Claim 2 (Cancelled).

3. (Currently Amended) The absorbent garment of claim 1 wherein said absorbent element is directly connected to said chassis front and rear body panels at said first ~~location~~ locations with a primary bond, and wherein said first portion of said cover sheet is detachably connected to said ~~at least one of said second portion of said cover~~

sheet ~~and said chassis~~ at said second location with a secondary bond, wherein said secondary bond is weaker than said primary bond.

4. (Previously Presented) The absorbent garment of claim 1 wherein said absorbent material has a first and second side, and further comprising a topsheet disposed adjacent said first side of said absorbent material.

5. (Currently Amended and Withdrawn) The absorbent garment of claim 1 wherein said second location is positioned laterally outboard from said first ~~location~~ locations.

6. (Currently Amended) The absorbent garment of claim 1 wherein said absorbent element has a longitudinal extent and wherein said first ~~location extends~~ locations extend longitudinally along at least a portion of said absorbent element.

7. (Currently Amended) The absorbent garment of claim 6 wherein said second location extends longitudinally along at least a portion of said absorbent element in a parallel relationship with said first ~~location~~ locations.

8. (Currently Amended) The absorbent garment of claim 1 wherein said absorbent element has a longitudinal extent, wherein each of said first ~~location~~ locations comprises a pair of laterally spaced, parallel and longitudinally extending primary locations, and wherein said second location comprises a pair of laterally spaced secondary locations.

9. (Previously Presented) The absorbent garment of claim 1 wherein said second location comprises a bonding region defined by a longitudinally extending length and a laterally extending width.

10. (Currently Amended) The absorbent garment of claim 6 wherein said absorbent

element comprises opposite ends, wherein ~~at least one of said opposite ends is~~ are connected to respective ones of said chassis front and back panels at said first ~~location~~ locations.

11. (Currently Amended) The absorbent garment of claim 10 wherein said ~~connection~~ connections between said ~~at least one of said~~ ends of said absorbent element and said chassis front and rear panels at said first ~~location~~ locations ~~is~~ are longitudinally spaced apart from said second location.

12. (Previously Presented) The absorbent garment of claim 1 wherein said absorbent material comprises a first fold having opposite side edges and a second and third fold attached to said opposite side edges of said first fold respectively and extending inwardly in an overlying relationship with said first fold.

13. (Withdrawn) The absorbent garment of claim 1 wherein said absorbent material comprises a plurality of disconnected layers.

14. (Previously Presented) The absorbent garment of claim 1 wherein said absorbent material is not directly attached to said cover sheet.

15. (Withdrawn) The absorbent garment of claim 1 wherein said chassis comprises a top sheet and an extensible outer cover.

Claim 16 (Cancelled).

Claim 17 (Cancelled).

18. (Withdrawn) The absorbent garment of claim 4 wherein said topsheet is interfolded with said absorbent material.

Claim 19 (Cancelled).

20. (Currently Amended) The absorbent garment of claim ~~19~~ 1 wherein said first and second portions of said cover sheet comprise overlying folds of said cover sheet.

Claim 21 (Cancelled).

22. (Withdrawn) A method of absorbing exudates excreted from a user with an absorbent garment comprising:

providing a chassis having a body side surface and a garment side surface and an absorbent element connected to said garment side surface of said chassis at a first location, said absorbent element comprising a cover sheet having a first portion detachably connected to at least one of a second portion of said cover sheet and said garment side surface of said chassis at a second location, wherein said absorbent element comprises an absorbent material and wherein said first and second portions of said cover sheet are each formed on an outer surface of said cover sheet;

securing said chassis to a body of the user;

insulting said absorbent material with said exudates and thereby causing said absorbent material to expand; and

disconnecting said first portion of said cover sheet from said at least one of said second portion of said cover sheet and said garment side surface of said chassis at at least a portion of said second location as said absorbent material expands while maintaining said connection between said cover sheet and said garment side surface of said chassis at said first location.

Claim 23 (Cancelled).

24. (Withdrawn) The method of claim 22 wherein said absorbent element is

connected to said chassis at said first location with a primary bond, and wherein said first portion of said cover sheet is detachably connected to at least one of said second portion of said cover sheet and said chassis at said second location with a secondary bond, wherein said secondary bond is weaker than said primary bond.

25. (Withdrawn) The method of claim 22 wherein said absorbent material has a first and second side, and further comprising a topsheet disposed adjacent said first side of said absorbent material.

26. (Withdrawn) The method of claim 22 wherein said absorbent element has a longitudinal extent and wherein said second location is positioned laterally outboard from said first location.

27. (Withdrawn) The method of claim 26 wherein said first location extends longitudinally along at least a portion of said absorbent element.

28. (Withdrawn) The method of claim 27 wherein said second location extends longitudinally along at least a portion of said absorbent element in a parallel relationship with said first location.

29. (Withdrawn) The method of claim 22 wherein said absorbent element has a longitudinal extent, wherein said first location comprises a pair of laterally spaced, parallel and longitudinally extending first locations, and wherein said second location comprises a pair of laterally spaced secondary locations.

30. (Withdrawn) The method of claim 22 wherein said first portion of said cover sheet is detachably connected to said second portion of said cover sheet.

31. (Withdrawn) The method of claim 22 wherein said first portion of said cover

sheet is detachably connected to said chassis.

32. (Currently Amended) A method of assembling an absorbent garment comprising:
providing a chassis comprising front and back panels each having a terminal crotch edge and a terminal waist edge, said front and back panels each having a body side surface and a garment side surface, said terminal crotch edges of said front and back panels spaced apart in a longitudinal direction so as to form a gap between said terminal crotch edges;

providing bridging said gap with an absorbent element comprising an absorbent material and a cover sheet;

bonding said absorbent element with a primary bond directly to said garment side surface of each of said front and back panels ~~chassis~~ at at least one primary bond region; and

bonding a first portion of said cover sheet directly to at least one of a second portion of said cover sheet and ~~said garment side surface of said chassis~~ with a secondary bond at at least one secondary bond region, wherein said secondary bond is weaker than said primary bond and wherein said first and second portions of said cover sheet are each formed on a first surface of said cover sheet, and wherein said absorbent material is disposed adjacent a second surface of said cover sheet opposite said first surface.

33. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 32 wherein said first and second bond regions are laterally spaced.

34. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 32 wherein each of said at least one said primary bond region comprises a pair of laterally spaced, parallel and longitudinally extending primary bond regions, and wherein said at least one secondary bond region comprises a pair of laterally spaced secondary bond regions.

35. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 32 wherein said absorbent material comprises a first fold having opposite side edges and a second and third fold attached to said opposite side edges of said first fold respectively and extending inwardly in an overlying relationship with said first fold.

36. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 32 further comprising disposing a topsheet adjacent one side of said absorbent element.

Claims 37-48 (Cancelled).

49. (Currently Amended) The absorbent garment of claim 1 wherein said absorbent element is fixedly, detachably, directly connected to said garment side surface of said ~~chassis~~ front and rear panels at said first ~~location~~ locations.

50. (Previously Presented) The absorbent garment of claim 1 wherein said absorbent element further comprises an outer cover disposed over said cover sheet.

51. (Withdrawn) The method of claim 22 wherein said providing said absorbent element further comprises providing an outer cover disposed over said cover sheet.

52. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 32 wherein said providing said absorbent element further comprises providing an outer cover disposed over said cover sheet.

Claims 53-54 (Cancelled).

55. (Currently Amended) The absorbent garment of claim 1 wherein ~~said chassis comprises a front body panel and a rear body panel~~, each of said front and back rear body panels comprising a waist portion, wherein said waist portions of said front and

~~rear-body~~ back panels are secured to define leg openings.

56. (Currently Amended) The absorbent garment of claim 55 wherein said waist portions of said front and ~~rear-body~~ back panels are secured with releasable fasteners.

57. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 32 wherein ~~said chassis comprises a~~
each of said front and back panels comprises body panel and a rear body panel each
~~comprising~~ a waist portion, wherein said waist portions of said front and ~~rear-body~~
back panels are securable to define leg openings.

58. (Currently Amended) The absorbent garment of claim 57 wherein said waist portions of said front and ~~rear-body~~ back panels are securable with releasable fasteners.

59. (Currently Amended and withdrawn) The absorbent garment of claim 1 wherein no portion of said absorbent element is secured to any portion of said bodyside surface of said front and back panels ~~body chassis~~.

60. (Currently Amended and withdrawn) The absorbent garment of claim 32 wherein no portion of said absorbent element is secured to any portion of said bodyside surface of said ~~body chassis~~ front and back panels.